1609/2699
Dan Warren X

A LETTER

FROM A DISTINGUISHED

ENGLISH COMMONER,

TO A

PEER OF IRELAND,

ON THE

PENAL LAWS

AGAINST

IRISH CATHOLICS;

PREVIOUS TO THE LATE REPEAL OF A PART THEREOF, IN THE SESSION OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT, HELD A. D. 1782.

DUBLIN:
Printed for MATTHEW DOYLE, No. 196, Abbey-Street.

M,DCC,LXXXIII.

15 JAN 65

1609/2699.

A

LETTER

FROM A

Diſtinguiſhed ENGLISH COMMONER, &c.

Charles-ſtreet, London, Feb. 21, 1782.

MY LORD,

I AM obliged to your lordſhip for your communication of the heads of Mr. Gr——r's bill. I had received it in an earlier ſtage of it's progreſs, from Mr. Br-gh-ll; and I am ſtill in that gentleman's debt, as I have not made him the proper return for the favour he has done me. Buſineſs, to which I was more immediately called, and in which my ſentiments had the weight of one vote, occupied me every moment, ſince I received his letter. This firſt morning, which I can call my own, I give with great chearfulneſs to the ſubject, on which your lordſhip has done me the honour of deſiring my opinion. I have read the heads of the bill,

with the amendments. Your lordſhip is too well acquainted with men, and with affairs, to imagine that any true judgment can be formed on the value of a great meaſure of policy, from the peruſal of a piece of paper. At preſent I am much in the dark, with regard to the ſtate of the country, which the intended law is to be applied to. It is not eaſy for me to determine whether or no it was wiſe (for the ſake of expunging the black letter of laws, which, menacing as they were in the language, were every day fading into diſuſe) ſolemnly to reaffirm the principles, and to re-enact the proviſions of a code of ſtatutes, by which you are totally excluded from THE PRIVILEGES OF THE COMMONWEALTH, from the higheſt to the loweſt, from the moſt material of the civil profeſſions, from the army, and even from education, where alone, education is to be had. Whether this ſcheme of indulgence, grounded at once on contempt and jealouſy, has a tendency gradually to produce ſomething better and more liberal, I cannot tell, for want of having the actual map of the country. If this ſhould be the caſe, it was right in you to accept it, ſuch as it is. But if this ſhould be one of the experiments, which have ſometimes been made, before the temper of the nation was ripe for a real reformation, I think it may poſſibly have ill effects, by diſpoſing the penal matter in a more ſyſtematic order, and thereby fixing a permanent bar againſt any thing that is truly ſubſtantial. The whole merit or demerit of the meaſure depends upon the plans and diſpoſitions of thoſe

thoſe by whom the act was made, concurring with the general temper of the proteſtants of Ireland, and their aptitude to admit in time of ſome part of that equality, without which you never can be FELLOW CITIZENS.——Of all this I am wholly ignorant. All my correſpondence with men of public importance, in Ireland, has for ſome time totally ceaſed. On the firſt bill for the relief of the Roman Catholics of Ireland, I was, without any call of mine, conſulted both on your ſide of the water and on this. On the preſent occaſion, I have not heard a word from any man in office; and know as little of the intentions of the Britiſh government, as I know of the temper of the Iriſh parliament. Your lordſhip mentions that oppoſition is expected from the archbiſhop of C——ll. If I am rightly informed, he has obtained that high and lucrative office under the crown, by the credit of his uncle, Mr. E—who has himſelf an high and tolerably profitable office under the king, and has been for many years conſtantly in ſuch offices; and, I am told, looks to the peerage. Oppoſition, too, is hinted from other perſons, who hold great places and have multiplied great emoluments under government. I do not find that any oppoſition was made by the principal perſons, of the minority in the houſe of Commons, or that any is apprehended from them in the houſe of Lords. The whole of the difficulty ſeems to lie with the principal men in government under whoſe protection this bill is ſuppoſed to be brought in. This violent oppoſition and cordial

ſupport, coming from one and the ſame quarter, appears to me ſomething myſterious, and hinders me from being able to make any clear judgment of the merit of the preſent meaſure, as compared with the actual ſtate of the country, and the general views of government, without which one can ſay nothing that may not be very erroneous.

To look at the Bill, in the abſtract, it is neither more or leſs than a renewed act of UNIVERSAL, UNMITIGATED, INDISPENSABLE, EXCEPTIONLESS DISQUALIFICATION.

One would imagine, that a Bill, inflicting ſuch a multitude of incapacities, had followed on the heels of a conqueſt, made by a very fierce enemy, under the impreſſion of recent animoſity and reſentment. No man, on reading that bill, could imagine he was reading an act of amneſty and indulgence, following a recital of the good behaviour of thoſe who are the objects of it; which recital ſtood at the head of the bill, as it was firſt introduced: but, I ſuppoſe for its incongruity with the body of the piece, was afterwards omitted.——This I ſay on memory. It however ſtill recites the oath, and that catholics ought to be conſidered as good and loyal ſubjects to his majeſty, his crown and government. Then follows an univerſal excluſion of thoſe GOOD and LOYAL ſubjects from every (even the loweſt) office of truſt and profit; from any vote at an election; from any privilege in a town corporate; from being even a freeman of ſuch corporations; from ſerving on grand juries; from

a vote

a vote at a veſtry; from having a gun in his houſe, from being a Barriſter, Attorney, or Solicitor, &c. &c. &c.

This has ſurely a much more the air of a Table of proſcription, than an act of grace. What muſt we ſuppoſe the laws, concerning thoſe good ſubjects, to have been, of which this is a relaxation? I know well that there is a cant current, about the difference between an excluſion from employments even to the moſt rigorous extent, and an excluſion from the natural benefits ariſing from a man's own induſtry. I allow, that under ſome circumſtances, the difference is very material in point of juſtice, and that there are conſiderations which may render it adviſeable for a wiſe government to keep the leading parts of every branch, of civil and military adminiſtration in hands of the beſt truſt: But a total excluſion from the commonwealth is a very different thing. When a government ſubſiſts (as governments formerly did) on an eſtate of its own, with but few and inconſiderable revenues drawn from the ſubject, then the few officers which ſubſiſted, were naturally at the diſpoſal of thoſe who paid the ſalaries out of their own pockets, and there an excluſive preference could hardly merit the name of proſcription: almoſt the whole produce of a man's induſtry remained in his own purſe to maintain his family. When a very great portion of the labour of individuals goes to the ſtate, and is by the ſtate again refunded to individuals, thro' the medium of offices, and in this

this circuitous progreſs from the public to the private fund, indemnifies the families from whom it is taken, an equitable balance between the government and the ſubject is eſtabliſhed. But if a great body of the people who contribute to this ſtate lottery, are excluded from all the prizes, the ſtopping the circulation with regard to them, may be a moſt cruel hardſhip, amounting in effect to being double and treble taxed, and will be felt as ſuch to the very quick by all the families high and low of thoſe hundreds of thouſands, who are denied their chance in the returned fruits of their own induſtry. This is the thing meant by thoſe who look upon the public revenue only as a ſpoil; and will naturally wiſh to have as few as poſſible concerned in the diviſion of the booty. If a ſtate ſhould be ſo unhappy as to think it cannot ſubſiſt without ſuch a barbarous proſcription, the perſons ſo proſcribed ought to be indemnified by the remiſſion of a large part of their taxes, by an immunity from the offices of public burden, and by an exemption from being preſſed into any military or naval ſervice.

Common ſenſe and common juſtice dictate this at leaſt, as ſome ſort of compenſation for their ſlavery. How many families are incapable of exiſting, if the little offices of the revenue, and little military commiſſions are denied them? To deny them at home, and to make the happineſs of acquiring ſome of them ſomewhere elſe, felony, or high treaſon, is a piece of cruelty, in which till very lately I did not ſuppoſe this age capable of perſiſting. Formerly a ſimilarity of religion

made

made a ſort of country for a man in ſome quarter or other. A refugee for religion was a protected character. Now, the reception is cold indeed: and therefore as the aſylum abroad is deſtroyed, the hardſhip at home is doubled. This hardſhip is the more intolerable becauſe the profeſſions are ſhut up. The church is ſo of courſe. Much is to be ſaid on that ſubject, in regard to them, and to the proteſtant diſſenters. But that is a chapter by itſelf. I am ſure I wiſh well to that church, and think it's miniſters among the very beſt citizens of your country. However ſuch as it is, a great walk in life is forbiddenground to ſeventeen hundred thouſand of the inhabitants of Ireland. Why are they excluded from the law? Do not they expend money in their ſuits? Why may not they indemnify themſelves, by profiting, in the perſons of ſome, for the loſſes incurred by others? Why may not they have perſons of confidence,whom they may,if they pleaſe, employ in the agency of their affairs? The excluſion from the law, from grand juries, from ſheriffſhips, and underſheriffſhips, as well as from freedom in any corporation, may ſubject them to dreadful hardſhips, as it may exclude them wholly from all that is beneficial, and expoſe them to all that is miſchievous in a trial by jury. This was manifeſtly within my own obſervation, for I was three times in Ireland from the year 1760 to the year 1767, where I had ſufficient means of information, concerning the inhuman proceedings (among which were many cruel murders, beſides an infinity

of

of outrages and oppreſſions, unknown before in a civilized age) which prevailed during that period in conſequence of a pretended conſpiracy among roman catholics againſt the king's government, I could dilate upon the miſchiefs that may happen, from thoſe which have happened, upon this head of diſqualification, if it were at all neceſſary.

THE head of excluſion from votes for members of parliament is cloſely connected with the former. When you caſt your eye ou the ſtatute book, you will ſee that no catholic, even in the ferocious act of queen Anne, was diſabled from voting, on account of his religion. The only conditions required for that privilege, were the oaths of allegiance and abjuration---both oaths relative to a civil concern. Parliament has ſince added another oath of the ſame kind: and yet an houſe of commons adding to the ſecurities of government, in proportion as its danger is confeſſedly leſſened, and profeſſing both confidence and indulgence, in effect takes away the privilege left by an act full of jealouſy, and profeſſing perſecution.

The taking away of a vote is the taking away the ſhield which the ſubject has, not only againſt the oppreſſion of power, but that worſt of all oppreſſions, the perſecution of private ſociety, and private manners. No candidate for parliamentary influence is obliged to the leaſt attention towards them, either in cities or counties. On the contrary, if they ſhould become obnoxious to any bigotted or malignant people amongſt whom they

they live, it will become the intereſt of thoſe who court popular favour, to uſe the numberleſs means which always reſide in magiſtracy and influence, to oppreſs them. The proceedings in a certain county in Munſter, during the unfortunate period I have mentioned, read a ſtrong lecture on the cruelty of depriving men of that ſhield, on account of their ſpeculative opinions. The proteſtants of Ireland feel well and naturally on the hardſhip of being bound by laws in the enacting of which they do not directly or indirectly vote. The bounds of theſe matters are nice, and hard to be ſettled in theory, and perhaps they have been puſhed too far. But how they can avoid the neceſſary application in the caſe of others towards them, I know not.

It is true, the words of this act do not create a diſability; but they clearly and evidently ſuppoſe it. There are few catholic freeholders to take the benefit of the privilege, if they were permitted to partake it; but the manner in which this very right in freeholders at large is defended, is not on the idea that they do really and truly repreſent the people; but that all people being capable of obtaining freeholds, all thoſe, who, by their induſtry and ſobriety merit this privilege, have the means of arriving at votes. It is the ſame with the corporations.

The laws againſt foreign education are clearly the very worſt part of the old code. Beſides your laiety, you have the ſucceſſion of about 4000 clergymen to provide for. Theſe having no lucrative thing

thing in proſpect, are taken very much out of the lower orders of the people. At home, they have no means whatſoever provided for their attaining a clerical education, or indeed any education at all. When I was in Paris, about ſeven years ago, I looked at every thing, and lived with every kind of people, as well as my time admitted. I ſaw there the Iriſh college of the Lombard, which ſeemed to me a very good place of education, under excellent orders and regulations, and under the government of a very prudent and learned man [the late Dr. Kelly]. This college was poſſeſſed of an annual fixed revenue of more than a thouſand pounds a year; the greateſt part of which had ariſen from the legacies and benefactions of perſons educated in that college, and who had obtained promotions in France, from whence they made this grateful return. One in particular I remember, to the amount of ten thouſand livers, annually, as it is recorded on the donor's monument in their chapel.

It has been the cuſtom of poor perſons in Ireland, to pick up ſuch knowledge, of the latin tongue as, under the general diſcouragements, and occaſional purſuits of magiſtracy, they were able to acquire; and receiving orders then at home, were ſent abroad to obtain a clerical education. By officiating in petty chaplainſhips, and performing, now and then, certain offices of religion for ſmall gratuities, they received the means of maintaining themſelves, until they were able to compleat their education.

Through

Through ſuch difficulties and diſcouragements, many of them have arrived at a very conſiderable proficiency, ſo as to be marked and diſtinguiſhed abroad, who afterwards, by being ſunk in the moſt abject poverty, deſpiſed and ill-treated by the higher orders among proteſtants, and not much better eſteemed or treated, even by the few perſons of fortune of their own perſuaſion; and contracting the habits and ways of thinking of the poor and uneducated, among whom they were obliged to live, in a few years retained little or no traces of the talents and acquirements, which diſtinguiſhed them in the early period of their lives. Can we, with juſtice, cut them off from the uſe of places of education, founded, for the greater part, from the economy of poverty and exile, without providing ſomething that is equivalent at home?

Whilſt this reſtraint of foreign and domeſtic education was part of an horrible and impious ſyſtem of ſervitude, the members were well fitted to the body. To render men patient, under a deprivation of all the rights of human nature, every thing which could give them a knowledge or feeling of thoſe rights was rationally forbidden. To render humanity fit to be inſulted, it was fit that it ſhould be degraded. But when we profeſs to reſtore men to the capacity for property, it is equally irrational and unjuſt to deny them the power of improving their minds as well as their fortunes. Indeed, I have ever thought the prohibition of the means of improving our rational nature, to be the worſt ſpecies of tyranny that the

inſolence and perverſeneſs of mankind ever dared to exerciſe. This goes to all men, in all ſituations, to whom education can be denied.

Your lordſhip mentions a propoſal which came from my friend the Provoſt, whoſe benevolence and enlarged ſpirit I am perfectly convinced of; which is, the propoſal of erecting a few ſizerſhips in the college, for the education (I ſuppoſe) of roman catholic clergymen. He certainly meant it well; but, coming from ſuch a man as he is, it is a ſtrong inſtance of the danger of ſuffering any deſcription of men to fall into entire contempt—The charities intended for them are not perceived to be freſh inſults; and the true nature of their wants and neceſſities being unknown, remedies, wholly unſuitable to the nature of their complaint are provided for them. It is to feed a ſick Gentoo with beef broth, and foment his wounds with brandy. If the other parts of the univerſity were open to them, as well on the foundation as otherwiſe, the offering of ſizerſhips would be a proportioned part of a *general* kindneſs. But when every thing *liberal* is withheld, and only that which is *ſervile* is permitted, it is eaſy to conceive upon what footing they muſt be in ſuch a place.

Mr. Hutchinſon muſt well know the regard and honour I have for him; and he cannot think my diſſenting from him in this particular, ariſes from a diſregard of his opinion: it only ſhews that I think he has lived in Ireland: to have any reſpect for the character and perſon of a popiſh prieſt there——oh! 'tis an uphill work indeed But until we come to reſpect what ſtands in a reſpectable

ſpectable light with others, we are very deficient in the temper which qualifies us to make any laws and regulations about them. It even diſqualifies us from being charitable to them with any effect or judgment.

When we are to provide for the education of any body of men, we ought ſeriouſly to conſider the particular functions they are to perform in life. A Roman catholic clergyman is the miniſter of a very ritual religion: and by his profeſſion, ſubject to many reſtraints. His life is a life full of ſtrict obſervances, and his duties, of a laborious nature towards himſelf, and of the higheſt poſſible truſt towards others. The duty of Confeſſion alone is ſufficientto ſet in the ſtrongeſt light the neceſſity of his having an appropriated mode of education. The theological opinions and peculiar Rites of one religion never can be proper lytaught in univerſities, founded for the purpoſes and on the principles of another, which in many points is directly oppoſite. If a Roman catholic clergyman, intended for celibacy, and the function of Confeſſion, is not ſtrictly bred in a ſeminary where theſe things are reſpected, inculcated and enforced, as ſacred, and not made the ſubject of deriſion and obloquy, he will be ill fitted for the former, and the latter will be indeed in his hands a terrible inſtrument.

There is a great reſemblance between the whole frame and conſtitution of the Greek and Latin churches. The ſecular clergy in the former, by being

being married, living under little reſtraint, and having no particular education ſuited to their function, are univerſally fallen into ſuch contempt, that they are never permitted to aſpire to the dignities of their own church. It is not held reſpectful to call them papas, their true and ancient appellation but thoſe who wiſh to addreſs them with civility, always call them hieromonachi. In conſequence of this diſreſpect, which I venture to ſay, in ſuch a church muſt be the conſequence of a ſecular life, a very great degeneracy from reputable chriſtian manners has taken place throughout that great number of the chriſtian church.

It was ſo with the Latin church, before the reſtraint on marriage. Even that reſtraint gave riſe to the greateſt diſorder before the council of Trent, which together with the emulation raiſed, and the good examples given by the reformed churches, wherever they were in view of each other, has brought on that happy amendment, which we ſee in the Latin communion, both at home and abroad.

The council of Trent has wiſely introduced the diſcipline of ſeminaries, by which prieſts are not truſted for a clerical inſtitution, even to the ſevere diſcipline of their colleges; but after they paſs through them, are frequently, if not the greater part, obliged to paſs through peculiar methods, having their particular ritual function in view. It is in a great meaſure to this, and to ſimilar methods uſed in foreign education, that the Roman catholic clergy of Ireland, miſerably provided for, living among low and ill-regulated people, without any diſcipline

diſcipline of ſufficient force to ſecure good manners, been hindered from becoming an intolerable nuiſance to the country, inſtead of being, as I conceive they generally are, a very great ſervice to it.

The miniſters of proteſtant churches require a different mode of education, more liberal and more fit for the ordinary intercourſe of life, and having little hold on the minds of people by external ceremonies, and extraordinary obſervances, or ſeparate habits of living, they make up the deficiency by cultivating their minds with all kinds of ornamental learning, which the liberal proviſion made in England and Ireland for the parochial clergy, and the comparative lightneſs of parochial duties enables the greater part of them in ſome conſiderable degree to accompliſh; to ſay nothing of the ample church preferments, with little or no duties annexed.

This learning, which I believe to be pretty general, together with an higher ſituation, and more chaſtened by the opinion of mankind, forms a ſufficient ſecurity for their morals, and their ſuſtaining their clerical character with dignity. It is not neceſſary to obſerve, that all theſe things are, however, collateral to their function, and that except in preaching, which may be and is ſupplied, and often beſt ſupplied, out of printed books, little elſe is neceſſary for a proteſtant miniſter, than to be able to read the Engliſh language; I mean for the exerciſe of his function, not to the ſecurity of his admiſſion. But a popiſh parſon in Ireland may do very well without any conſiderable claſſical erudition, or any

proficiency

proficiency in pure or mixed mathematics, or any knowledge of civil hiſtory. Even if they ſhould poſſeſs thoſe acquiſitions, as at firſt many of them do, they ſoon loſe them in the painful courſe of profeſſional and parochial duties: but they muſt have all the knowledge, and what is to them more important than the knowledge, the diſcipline neceſſary to thoſe duties. All modes of education, conducted by thoſe whoſe minds are caſt in another mould, as I may ſay, and whoſe original ways of thinking are formed upon the reverſe pattern, muſt be to them not only uſeleſs, but miſchievous. Juſt as I ſhould ſuppoſe the education in a popiſh eccleſiaſtical ſeminary would be ill fitted for a proteſtant clergyman. Here it would be much more ſo; as, in the caſe of the firſt, it only requires to reject: in the other little for his purpoſe is to be acquired.

All this, my lord, I know very well, will paſs for nothing with thoſe who wiſh that the popiſh clergy ſhould be illiterate, and in a ſituation to produce contempt and deteſtation. Their minds are wholly taken up with party ſquabbles, and I have neither leiſure nor inclination to apply any part of what I have to ſay, to thoſe who never think of religion, or of the commonwealth, in any other light, than as they tend to the prevalence of ſome faction in either. I ſpeak on a ſuppoſition, that there is a diſpoſition to take the ſtate in the condition in which it is found, and to improve it in that ſtate to the beſt advantage. Hitherto, the plan for the government

of

Ireland has been, to ſacrifice the civil proſperity of the nation to its religious improvement. But if people in power there, are at length come to entertain other ideas, they will conſider the good order, decorum, virtue, and morality of every deſcription of men among them, as of infinitely greater importance, than the ſtruggle (for it is nothing better) to change thoſe deſcriptions by means which put to hazard, objects, which, in my poor opinion, are of more importance to religion and to the ſtate, than all the polemical matter which has been agitated among men from the beginning of the world to this hour.

On this idea, an education fitted to each order and diviſion of men, ſuch as they are found, will be thought an affair rather to be encouraged than diſcountenanced: and until inſtitutions at home, ſuitable to the occaſions and neceſſities of the people, and which are armed, as they are abroad, with authority to coerce the young men to be formed in them, by a ſtrict and ſevere diſcipline,—— the means they have, at preſent, of a cheap and effectual education in other countries, ſhould not continue to be prohibited by penalties and modes of inquiſition, not fit to be mentioned to ears that are organized to the chaſte ſounds of equity and juſtice. Before I had written thus far, I heard of a ſcheme of giving to the Caſtle the patronage of the preſiding members of the catholic clergy. At firſt I could ſcarcely credit it: for I believe it is the firſt time

that the preſentation of other people's alms has been deſired in any country. If the ſtate provides a ſuitable maintenance and temporality for thoſe governing members, and clergy under them, I ſhould think the project, however improper in other reſpects, to be by no means unjuſt. But to deprive a poor people, who maintain a ſecond ſet of clergy, out of the miſerable remains of what is left after taxing and tything—to deprive them of the diſpoſition of their own charities among their own communion, would, in my opinion, be an intolerable hardſhip. Never were the members of one religious ſect fit to appoint the paſtors to another. Thoſe who have no regard for their welfare, reputation, or internal quiet, will not appoint ſuch are as proper. The Seraglio of Conſtantinople is as equitable as we are, whether catholics or proteſtants: and where their own ſect is concerned, full as religious. But the ſport which they make of the miſerable dignities of the Greek church, the little factions of the Haram, to which they make them ſubſervient, the continual ſale to which they expoſe and re-expoſe the ſame dignity, and by which they ſqueeze all the inferior orders of the clergy, is (for I have had particular means of being acquainted with it) nearly equal to all the other oppreſſions together, exerciſed by muſſulmen over the unhappy members of the Oriental church. It is a great deal to ſuppoſe that even the preſent Caſtle wouldnominate biſhops for the roman church of Ireland with a religious regard for its welfare. Perhaps they cannot, perhaps they dare not do it.

But

But ſuppoſe them as well inclined as I know that I am, to do them all kind of juſtice, I declare I would not, if it were in my power, take it on myſelf, I know I ought not to do it. I belong to another community, and it would be intolerable uſurpation in me to affect ſuch authority, where I conferred no benefit, or even if I did confer (as in ſome degree the Seraglio does) temporal advantages. But, allowing that the preſent Caſtle finds itſelf fit to adminiſter the government of a church which they ſolemnly forſwear, and forſwear with very hard words and many evil epithets, and that as often as they qualify themſelves for the power which is to give this very patronage, or to give any thing elſe that they deſire; yet they cannot inſure themſelves that a man like the late lord Cheſterfield will not ſucceed to them. This man, while he was duping the credulity of papiſts with fine words in private, and commending their good behaviour during a rebellion in Great Britain, (as it well deſerved to be commended and rewarded) was capable of urging penal laws againſt them in a ſpeech from the throne, and ſtimulating with provocatives the wearried and half-exhauſted bigotry of the then Parliament of Ireland. They ſet to work, but they were at a loſs what to do; for they had already almoſt gone through every contrivance which could waſte the vigour of their country: but, after much ſtruggle, they produced a child of their old age, the ſhocking and

unnatural act about marriages, which tended to finiſh the ſcheme for making the people not only two diſtinct parties for ever, but keeping them as two diſtinct ſpecies in the ſame land. Mr. G——r's humanity was ſhocked at it, as one of the worſt parts of that truly barbarous ſyſtem, if one could well ſettle the preference, where almoſt all the parts were outrages on the rights of humanity, and the law of nature.

Suppoſe an atheiſt, playing the part of a bigot, ſhould be in power again in that country, do you believe that he would faithfully and religiouſly adminiſter the truſt of appointing paſtors to a church, which, wanting every other ſupport, ſtands in tenfold need of miniſters who will be dear to the people committed to their charge, and who will exerciſe a really paternal authority amongſt them? But if the ſuperior power was always in a diſpoſition to diſpenſe conſcientiouſly, and like an upright truſtee and guardian of theſe rights which he holds for thoſe with whom he is at variance, has he the capacity and means of doing it? How can the Lord Lieutenant form the leaſt judgment of their merits, ſo as to diſcern which of popiſh prieſts is fit to be made a biſhop? It cannot be: the idea is ridiculous.—He will hand them over to Lords Lieutenant of counties, juſtices of the peace, and other perſons, who, for the purpoſe of vexing and turning to deriſion this miſerable people, will pick out the worſt and moſt obnoxious they can find amongſt

the

the clergy, to ſet over the reſt. Whoever is complainant againſt his brother, will be conſidered as perſecuted: whoever is cenſured by his ſuperior, will be looked upon as oppreſſed: whoever is careleſs in his opinions, and looſe in his morals, will be called a liberal man, and will be ſuppoſed to have incurred hatred, becauſe he was not a bigot. Informers, tale-bearers, perverſe and obſtinate men, flatterers, who turn their back upon their flock, and court the proteſtant gentlemen of the country, will be the objects of preferment. And then I run no riſk in foretelling, that whatever order, quiet, and morality you have in the country, will be loſt. A popiſh clergy, who are not reſtrained by the moſt auſtere ſubordination, will become a nuiſance, a real public grievance of the heavieſt kind, in any country that entertains them: and inſtead of the great benefit which Ireland does, and has long derived from them, if they are educated without any idea of diſcipline and obedience, and then put under biſhops, who do not owe their ſtation to their good opinion, and whom they cannot reſpect, that nation will ſee diſorders, of which, bad as things are, it has yet no idea. I do not ſay this as thinking the leading men in Ireland would exerciſe this truſt worſe than others. Not at all. No man, no ſet of men living are fit to adminiſter the affairs or regulate the interior economy of a church to which they are enemies.

As

As to Government, if I might recommend a prudent caution to them,—it would be, to innovate as little as poſſible, upon ſpeculation, in eſtabliſhments, from which, as they ſtand, they experience no material inconvenience to the repoſe of the country, —*quieta non movere*—I could ſay a great deal more; but I am tired: and am afraid your Lordſhip is tired too. I have not ſat to this letter a ſingle quarter of an hour without interruption. It has grown long, and probably contains many repetitions, from my total want of leiſure to digeſt and conſolidate my thoughts: and as to my expreſſions, I could wiſh to be able perhaps to meaſure them more exactly. But my intentions are fair, and I certainly mean to offend nobody.

* * * * * * * * * *
* * * * * * * * *

Thinking over this matter more maturely, I ſee no reaſon for altering my opinion in any part. The act, as far as it goes, is good undoubtedly. It amounts, I think, very nearly to a toleration, with reſpect to religious ceremonies, but it puts a new bolt on civil rights, and rivets it, I am afraid, to the old one in ſuch a manner, that neither, I fear, will be eaſily looſened. What I could have wiſhed would be, to ſee the civil advantages take the lead; the other, I conceive, would follow (in a manner) of courſe.

For what I have obſerved, it is pride, arrogance, and a ſpirit of domination, and not a bigotted ſpirit of religion, that has cauſed and kept up thoſe oppreſſive ſtatutes. I am ſure I have known

thoſe

thoſe who have oppreſſed papiſts in their civil rights, exceedingly indulgent to them in their religious ceremonies, and who wiſhed them to continue, in order to furniſh pretences for oppreſſion, and who never ſaw a man by converting eſcape out of their power, but with grudging and regret. I have known men, to whom I am not uncharitable in ſaying, (though they are dead,) that they would become papiſts in order to oppreſs proteſtants; if, being proteſtants, it was not in their power to oppreſs papiſts. It is injuſtice, and not a miſtaken conſcience, that has been the principle of perſecution, at leaſt as far as it has fallen under my obſervation. However, as I began, ſo I end. I do not know the map of the country. Mr. G——r, who conducts this great and difficult work, and thoſe who ſupport him, are better judges of the buſineſs than I can pretend to be, who have not ſet my foot in Ireland, thoſe ſixteen years. I have been given to underſtand, that I am not conſidered as a friend to that country: and I know that pains have been taken to leſſen the credit that I might have had there. * * * * * * * * * I am ſo convinced of the weakneſs of interfering in any buſineſs without the opinion of the people in whoſe buſineſs I interfere, that I do not know how to acquit myſelf, of what I have now done.—I have the honour to be, with high regard and eſteem,

my Lord,

Your lordſhip's moſt obedient
and humble ſervant, &c.

15
65
JAN